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#3

MOONSTONE

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THE PHANTOM™

Ben Raab
Nick Derington

THE PHANTOM

created by LEE FALK

"CURSE OF THE PHANTOM"

PART ONE OF TWO

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANT
DR. BRYAN SHEDDEN

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THE JUNGLES OF BANGALLA...

HEY THERE, CHIEF! HOW'S IT *HANGIN'?*
HOW IS *WHAT* HANGING?
NEVERMIND. GOT THE *JUNK?*
WE HAD AN *AGREEMENT...*
DON'T GET YOUR BONES IN A BUNCH. I GOT IT RIGHT HERE.
THOUGH I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT YOU PEOPLE NEED THIS KINDA *CASH* FOR ANYWAY...
HERE. *SOMARA.*
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE IMPACT THIS STUFF'S HAVIN' *OUTSIDE* YOUR LITTLE JUNGLE, MAN.
IT'S *HOTTER* THAN HEROIN AND *CRAZIER* THAN CRACK. *EVERY-ONE'S* USIN' IT.
AND YOU'RE LOOKIN' AT THE *SOLE SUPPLIER...*

SHRRP
SHUNK
!?
JUST SAY NO TO DRUGS, GENTLEMEN.
YOU'LL LIVE LONGER.

TOUGH TALK-
-FROM A CORPSE!
KRAK
:NNNH:

NOT DEAD YET...

KUA'EYASA! KUA'LAMASA! KUA! KUA!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING *THAT* FOR?
TO LOOK UPON THE FACE OF THE *PHANTOM* IS TO SEE *DEATH!* ONLY *KUA THE UNDYING* CAN DELIVER US FROM HIS WRATH!
SUPERSTITIOUS SAVAGE.
BLAM BLAM
FWAP
OUGHT TO BE MORE TOLERANT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S *FAITH*, FRIEND.
NEVER KNOW WHEN THE SPIRIT MIGHT *HIT* YOU.
THWAK

DESERT EAGLE MARK XIX PISTOL... .357 CALIBER MAGNUM... POLYGONAL RIFLING, ONE TURN IN FOURTEEN INCHES...
AMMO CAPACITY, NINE ROUNDS, SEMI-STAGGERED...
BAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
EIGHT... SEVEN... SIX...
FIVE... FOUR... THREE...
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
THINK WE NAILED 'IM?
CHK-CHK!
WE JUST UNLOADED TWO FULL MAGAZINES OF HOLLOW-POINTS INTO A CHEAP WOODEN TABLE.
HOW COULD WE NOT?

UH... I THINK WE BETTER GET THE HELL *OUTTA* HERE...
ACTUALLY, FELLAS-
-THE ONLY PLACE *YOU'RE* GOING-
KRSSH
-IS BOOMSBY PENITENTIARY.
UNH
GUH

AT LEAST UNTIL THE PROPER AUTHORITIES EXTRADITE YOU TO YOUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES FOR *TRAFFICKING NARCOTICS* ACROSS INTERNATIONAL BORDERS.
YOU'VE MADE AN *ADDICT* OF YOUR LAST CHILD.
AS FOR YOUR *DEALER*...
FWEET
GRRR!
YOU'VE GOT A DATE WITH THE *JUNGLE PATROL*, MISTER.
MERCY, PHANTOM! I *BEG* YOU!
MERCY, BIG GUY? FOR DRUG PEDDLING *SCUM* LIKE YOU?
THAT'S FOR THE *COURTS* TO DECIDE.

TELL IT TO THE JUDGE, FREAK!
GAAHK!
AAHH!! GET YOUR DAMN DOG OFFA ME!
RRRAAR!
NOT DNH! DOG... WOLF...
WHATEVER! I'M BLOWIN' THIS JOINT BEFORE THE FEDS SHOW!
BUT THE SOMARA-
FORGET IT! YOU WANNA DO TIME IN A BACKWOODS JUNGLE JAIL OVER SOME SKAG?
NO FREAKIN' WAY, MAN! I'VE SEEN "MIDNIGHT EXPRESS"!
THEN FLOOR IT!
CHARLATAN... FRAUD... LIAR... THIEF...

KRA-KOOM
ACROSS THE BRIDGE OF TIME I HAVE JOURNEYED TO RECLAIM WHAT YOUR ANCESTOR STOLE FROM ME!
THERE SHALL BE RETRIBUTION! KUA THE UNDYING SHALL HAVE VENGEANCE!
SOON...
KRA KOOM
NOW THAT'S... SOMETHING YOU DON'T... SEE EVERY-
DAAAAAAAYY

G GURAN. .?
YES, PHANTOM?
THIS IS THE BANDAR VILLAGE...
YES, PHANTOM.
TIME I SWITCHED TO SKIM MILK...
HOW DID I GET HERE?
DEVIL CARRIED YOU.
THEN THAT'S ONE MYSTERY SOLVED. NOW, WHAT ABOUT THAT THING THAT ACCOSTED ME?
GURAN, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A DEMON GOD.
KUA... DEMON GOD OF THE WASAKA... YOU KEPT REPEATING ITS NAME IN YOUR DELIRIUM. DID YOU SEE HIM?
SOME, MY FRIEND, MIGHT SAY THAT ABOUT A GHOST WHO WALKS...
LOOK, IT WAS PROBABLY JUST A HALLUCINATION INDUCED BY THE POISON THAT GOT ON MY DAGGER.
SOMARA, THEY CALLED IT...

"BLOOD OF THE DEMON"... IT IS THE DISTILLATE OF MADMEN. A SACRED CEREMONIAL ELIXIR OF THE WASAKA TRIBE -
-THE CLAN OF GIANTS UNDER WHOSE OPPRESSIVE HEELS WE BANDAR WOULD STILL BE CRUSHED WERE IT NOT FOR THE INTERVENTION OF THE ORIGINAL PHANTOM, CENTURIES AGO.
I THOUGHT THE WASAKA DISAPPEARED AFTER MY ANCESTOR ASSUMED KUA'S GUISE AND FRIGHTENED THEM INTO LIBERATING YOUR PEOPLE FROM SLAVERY?
SEEMS THEY HAVE RETURNED.
WONDER WHAT BROUGHT THEM BACK? AND WHY ARE THEY SELLING THEIR RITUAL POTIONS FOR PROFIT?
QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS... RIDDLES WITHIN RIDDLES... ALL WRAPPED AROUND THE MAN WHO CANNOT DIE LIKE A SHROUD...
UH... YOU KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T, OLD MOZZ?
THE FATE OF THE PHANTOM IS INTERWOVEN WITH THAT OF THE WASAKA BY MORE THAN JUST THE STRANDS OF YOUR RAIMENT.
BE MINDFUL OF THE PAST, KIT WALKER, FOR IT WILL SHAPE YOUR FUTURE.
THANKS FOR THE ADVICE... I THINK...
YOU COULD HAVE TOLD HIM OF THE CURSE, YOU BLEATING, OLD GOAT.
IT CHANGES NOTHING, CHIEFTAIN. IF KUA THE UNDYING HAS REVEALED HIMSELF THIS NIGHT -

"–THE WALKER BLOODLINE IS *DOOMED.*"
THE KIDS ARE ON AN OVERNIGHT PEARL DIVING EXPEDITION WITH THE *TOUROO FISHERMEN*...
MMM HMNN.
...YOU KNOW WHAT THAT *MEANS*, DON'T YOU, KIT?
MMM HMNN.
WE HAVE THE *SKULL CAVE* TO OURSELVES. JUST THE *TWO* OF US.
ALONE.
MMM HMNN.
SO... DEMON GODS, HUH? THAT'S *UNUSUAL*. EVEN FOR YOU.
THERE'S A *LOGICAL* EXPLANATION FOR THIS SOMEWHERE IN THE *CHRONICLES* OF MY ANCESTORS, DIANA.
JUST HAVE TO *FIND* IT...

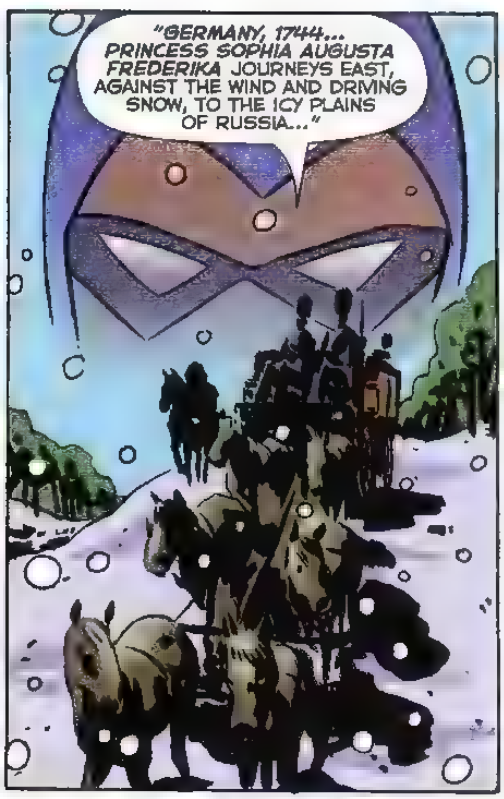
"CHRONICLE OF THE 4TH PHANTOM... JAPAN, 1624..."
"...THE YEAR BEFORE I ASSUMED FATHER'S MANTLE, AND SWORE OUR FAMILY'S SACRED OATH - TO FIGHT PIRACY, GREED, CRUELTY AND INJUSTICE - I FOUND MYSELF IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN..."
Just two decades after Tokugawa Ieyasu had assumed power and established his shogunate, there was already trouble in this newly unified kingdom.
A rival family, the Clan Kurosame, sought to usurp the bakufu by any means necessary.
Like my father and his father before him, I had left Bangalla to expand my knowledge of the world that it might help me better serve as the next Phantom.
Having proven the Shogun's worthy and loyal servant, I was made one of the Chief Imperial Retainers... Tokugawa Iemitsu's personal bodyguards.
An honor never before bestowed upon a gaijin... A foreigner...
I cherished this duty with all my heart and soul.
Though, not everyone in the royal court shared my enthusiasm...

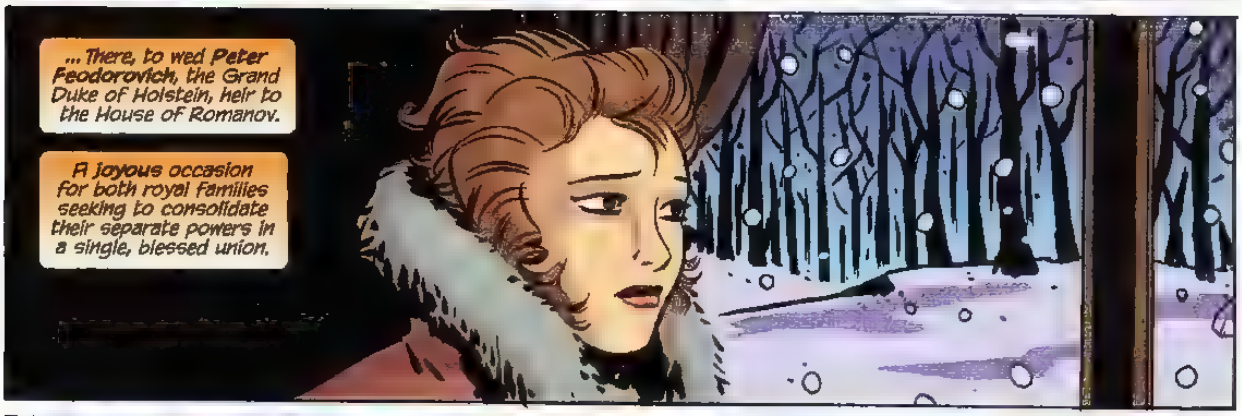
A few months into the campaign against the rebels, the Shogun's spies uncovered a Kurosame plot to raid one of the arsenals at Edo.
That night, at dinner, we gathered to strategize a pre-emptive strike...
...And fell prey to sabotage from within.
We lay unconscious... helpless... vulnerable..
Perhaps it was my superior constitution, honed razor sharp by a childhood spent in the Deep Woods, but I was first to revive.
Unfortunately, I had awakened from one nightmare...
...Only to discover another.

I had to act swiftly.
Not only was my honor at stake, but so was the Shogun's. And with him...
...The future of all Japan.
With Iemitsu finally safe...
...I set off to find the saboteur.

Our food had been drugged. Which meant the culprit had access to the kitchen.
There, the mystery only deepened...
The craftsmanship of the container that held the poison was unmistakable. It was from Bangalla.
Tojuro, the ambitious samurai who resented my presence most, seized this opportunity to accuse me of treachery against Lord Tokugawa.
A crime punishable by death for which I had no ready means of proving my innocence.
But the Shogun owed me his life that night.
With a heavy heart, he stripped me of my title and banished me from Japan... forever...
Tojuro could not have acted alone. Someone with knowledge of my native land had conspired with him. Someone with an even greater vendetta against me...
...But who?

INTERESTING STORY. BUT WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU TONIGHT?
I BELIEVE SOMARA WAS USED TO DRUG THE SAMURAI.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
BECAUSE THE CHRONICLES TELL ME SO. HERE, IN THE ANNALS OF THE 10TH PHANTOM...


"GERMANY, 1744... PRINCESS SOPHIA AUGUSTA FREDERIKA JOURNEYS EAST, AGAINST THE WIND AND DRIVING SNOW, TO THE ICY PLAINS OF RUSSIA..."


...There, to wed Peter Feodorovich, the Grand Duke of Holstein, heir to the House of Romanov.
A joyous occasion for both royal families seeking to consolidate their separate powers in a single, blessed union.

As a personal favor to her parents, the King and Queen, I have gladly undertaken the charge of escorting Sophia to MOSCOW.
I've known her since she was a babe. She's like the little sister I never had.

Thus far, our travels have been WITHOUT incident. Fates willing, they will remain so...

...SO YOUR GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S PISTOL HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT?
AND SOMEDAY I WILL PASS IT TO MY SONS. AS THEY WILL TO THEIRS.
IT'S ONE OF MY FAMILY'S MANY TRADITIONS...
YOUR MILK, GASPADIN.
SPACEEBA, DYEVOOSHKA.
HERR WALKER?
:SUH: SOMETHING'S... :RUH: WRONG... :UH: FEEL :DIH: DIZZY...
IT HAS BEEN A LONG JOURNEY. YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED.
COME, I WILL SHOW YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS...

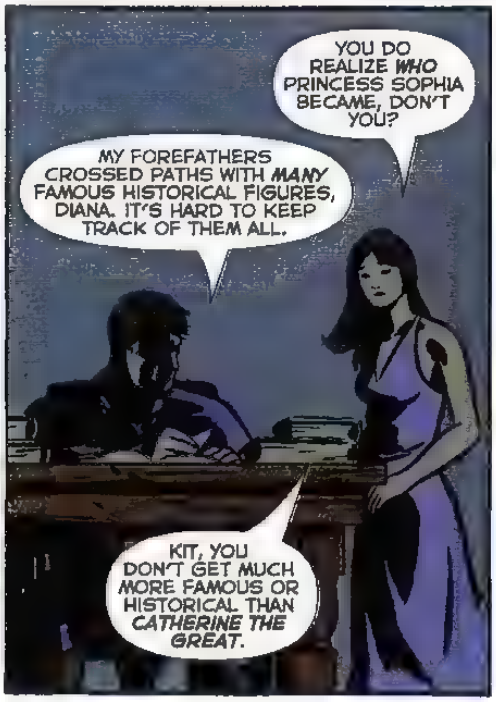
MISS, I BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE WRONG ROOM.
A LITTLE LATE :HRK: FOR ALL HALLOW'S EVE, :DNH: DON'T YOU THINK?
IT IS YOU WHO WEAR THE MASQUERADE, PHANTOM!
BUT TONIGHT, WITH YOUR DEATH, I SHALL END YOUR CHARADE!
BLAM
ARRH!
TWITCH, SAVAGE, AND THE NEXT ROUND PIERCES YOUR HEART!

SOPHIA! LOOK OUT!

I'M SUPPOSED TO PROTECT YOU, PRINCESS.
:NNH!:
NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
I DID NOT WISH TO SEE YOUR FAMILY TRADITION BROKEN, HERR WALKER.

APPARENTLY SOMEONE DOES...

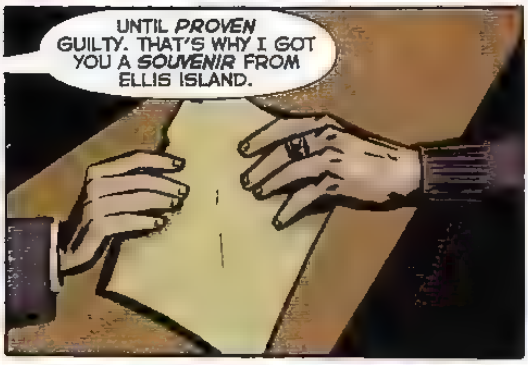
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHAT 'MASQUERADE' WAS HE TALKING ABOUT? IS THIS SOME CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE CROWN?
OUT WITH IT, GIR..!
I-I KNOW NOT, GASPADIN... I SIMPLY DID AS HE TOLD ME AND POURED THE SOMARA INTO YOUR DRINK... I WAS SO AFRAID...
P-PLEASE... D-DO NOT HURT ME...

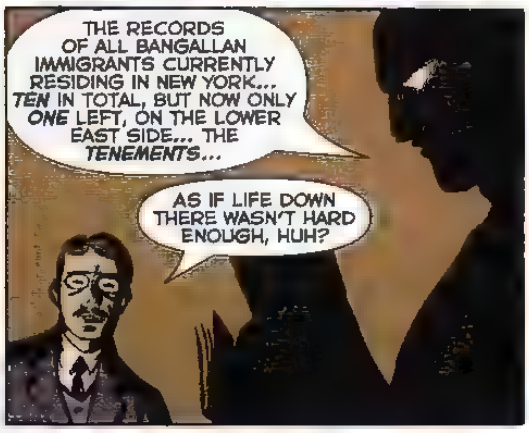

YOU DO REALIZE WHO PRINCESS SOPHIA BECAME, DON'T YOU?
MY FOREFATHERS CROSSED PATHS WITH MANY FAMOUS HISTORICAL FIGURES, DIANA. IT'S HARD TO KEEP TRACK OF THEM ALL.
KIT, YOU DON'T GET MUCH MORE FAMOUS OR HISTORICAL THAN CATHERINE THE GREAT.

TWO GENERATIONS OF PHANTOMS... TWO ENCOUNTERS WITH KUA... STARTING TO SEE A PATTERN HERE.
THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM...
TWICE IS A COINCIDENCE.
"NEW YORK, 1896..."
...A string of unexplained murders had the newly appointed Police Commissioner Teddy Roosevelt and the NYPD baffled.
Though none of the crimes shared the same pattern, they seemed linked by two recurring clues.
One... Each victim was of Bangallan origin.
And two

YOU HAVE MY *WORD* -

-I DID *NOT* KILL THOSE MEN.
YOU *KNOW* ME, THEODORE. YOU KNOW I AM *INNOCENT*.
JEEZ LOUISE, I HATE WHEN YOU DO THAT.


UNTIL *PROVEN* GUILTY. THAT'S WHY I GOT YOU A *SOUVENIR* FROM ELLIS ISLAND.


THE RECORDS OF ALL BANGALLAN IMMIGRANTS CURRENTLY RESIDING IN NEW YORK... *TEN* IN TOTAL, BUT NOW ONLY *ONE* LEFT, ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE... THE *TENEMENTS*...
AS IF LIFE DOWN THERE WASN'T HARD ENOUGH, HUH?

I BELIEVE THE KILLER IS USING THESE POOR PEOPLE TO GET TO *ME*. HE PUTS THEIR *BLOOD* ON *MY* HANDS.
I HAVE TO *AVENGE* THEM. I HAVE TO KNOW *WHY*...
FIGURED AS MUCH. BUT TREAD LIGHTLY, FRIEND. MANHATTAN *AIN'T* THE JUNGLE. LADY JUSTICE CAN ONLY TURN SO MUCH OF A *BLIND* -

-EYE.

(4F)
KRRAK!
AT LAST, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, WE MEET AGAIN, PHANTOM.
DROP THE KNIFE, YOU!
I SEE YOU RECEIVED MY MESSAGES. .

YOU DEAF? I SAID DROP IT!
BLAM!
GAAH!
YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF NERVE RUNNING AROUND TOWN PRETENDING TO BE ME, FELLA!
YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR YOUR CRIMES! IN SPADES!
THE BLOOD I HAVE SPILLED IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE RIVERS THAT WILL FLOW FOR YOUR INSOLENCE.
THE BLOOD OF YOUR CHILDREN... AND THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN... SHALL BE FOREVER CURSED!
We were five stories up.
Not even I could survive a fall from that height.
No human could...

KIT, YOU SAID YOURSELF, THERE'S A *LOGICAL* EXPLANATION FOR THIS. KUA IS *NOT* SOME IMMORTAL GOD.
HE'S *HAUNTED* OUR FAMILY FOR CENTURIES, ALL AROUND THE WORLD, AND HAS NOW RETURNED TO TORMENT US *AGAIN*, HERE IN BANGALLA.
HOW DO *YOU* ACCOUNT FOR HIS APPARENT *IMMORTALITY*?
SAME WAY AS I ACCOUNT FOR THE PHANTOM'S. MAYBE IT'S JUST A *TRADITION* PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT?
MAYBE...

HYAH, HERO!
KRAKOOM
KRAKOOM
TO BE CONTINUED...

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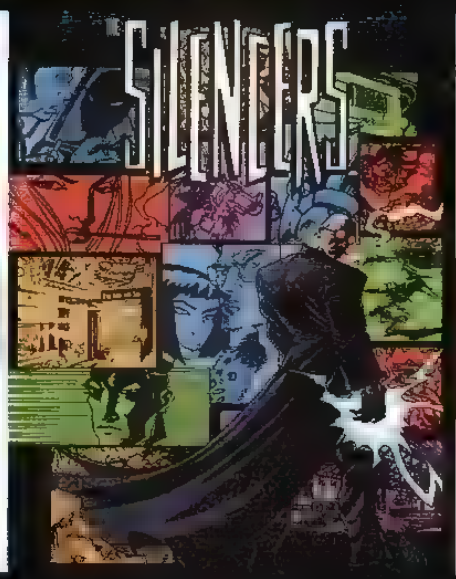
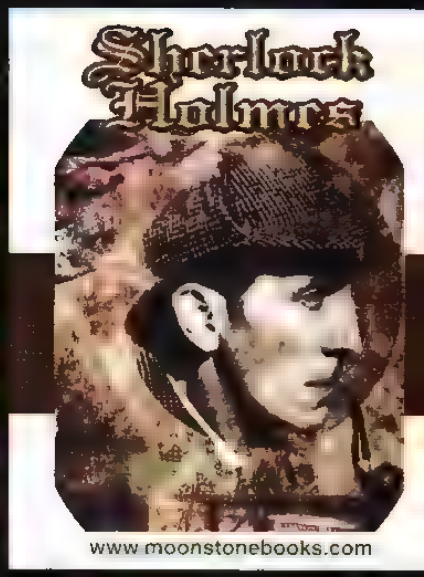
MERCHANDISE MART !





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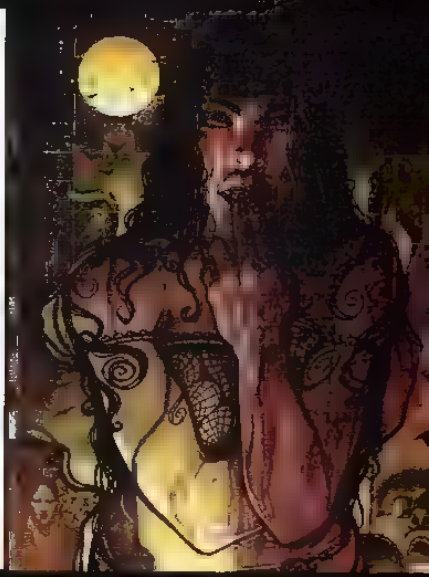

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— COMIX VIEW

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